



For Immediate Release:

March 1, 2018

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Klobuchar, Thune Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Improve Agriculture Data Research of Conservation Practices to Help Farmers Reduce Risk and Increase Profitability

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Thune (R-SD), senior members of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, today introduced bipartisan legislation to improve agriculture data research of conservation practices to help farmers reduce risk and increase profitability. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently manages and stores valuable producer data, but the data can be better utilized to inform producer understanding about which conservation practices reduce risk and improve profitability.

The *Agriculture Data Act* would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to collect, collate, integrate, and link data relating to the impacts of covered conservation practices on enhancing crop yields, soil health, and otherwise reducing risk and improving farm and ranch profitability. It would also give the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to establish a secure, confidential cloud-based conservation and farm productivity data warehouse to store operational, transactional, and administrative program databases and records that support business, statistical, and other analysis.

“Farmers sustain an important pillar of our nation’s economy, and do so under unpredictable market and weather conditions year-to-year,” Klobuchar said. **“This bipartisan legislation will ensure hardworking farmers are able to capitalize on the**

United States Department of Agriculture’s vast resources to streamline their operations, enhance yields, and increase profits.”

“One of the greatest challenges with applying the most effective conservation practices, like cover crops on working lands, is measuring the economic value these practices can provide, such as increased crop yields on subsequent crops,” Thune said. “This legislation would help farmers and land-grant universities better utilize USDA’s massive collection of conservation data and enable them to choose the best conservation practices that would improve productivity on farming operations.”

The *Agriculture Data Act* has been endorsed by the National Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy, the Environmental Defense Fund, and AGree.

“We are grateful to Senator Klobuchar for introducing this bill which will strengthen research across the country on the impacts of agricultural conservation practices. This bill would benefit Minnesota farmers and ranchers as they are provided more data on conservation and its increased crop yields, better soil health, and other risk-reducing factors,” Peggy Ladner, Director for The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota said.

“This smart legislation helps the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) draw on its incredible data sources to provide insights into the connection between conservation practices and crop yields. We thank Senators Klobuchar and Thune for taking the lead on improving data development, access, and use. This will provide farmers in Minnesota, and across the country, access to better information about the benefits of conservation practices to soil, water, wildlife and producer economics,” Jason Dinsmore, Interim Executive Director of Minnesota Conservation Federation and Director of Conservation Partnerships for National Wildlife Federation said.

“Conservation is a key element of South Dakota’s production agriculture landscape, and there’s an urgent need to learn more about the value of conservation practices in enhancing crop production, improving soil health, and reducing risk. The Agriculture Data Act of 2018 could provide land-grant universities, such as South Dakota State University, better access to USDA-compiled conservation data, resulting in more accurate recommendations for conservation practices and precision agriculture tools that are most beneficial for crop production and soil health,” Lisa Richardson, executive director of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association said.

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